

Editorial

'At a time of rapid economic and social change, we ignore the career development of people in employment at our peril.'

This is the challenging conclusion of Charles Jackson's paper on career development at work. It is one of four papers in this issue of the journal based on presentations by NICEC fellows at the CEDEFOP Guidance for Workforce Development Conference held in Thessaloniki, Greece 25-26 June 2007.

NICEC is committed to encouraging organisations of all sizes to nurture a culture of career development for their staff. Too often, the language of careers is still only heard in a negative context in the workplace, for example, to announce a career counselling package for staff facing redundancy. Career development for staff should apply in normal times and not just in crisis situations.

Support for career development should also be provided for all staff and not just for high-flyers and those on a fast-track to senior managerial and leadership positions. It makes business sense to nurture talent at all levels in an organisation. Recently, for example, the teaching profession and the Civil Service in England have introduced schemes to reward staff who wish to develop their technical expertise rather than have to move into management to get higher rewards. The articles by Charles Jackson, Wendy Hirsh, Ruth Hawthorn and Lesley Haughton presented at the CEDEFOP conference are designed to stimulate fresh thinking about how career guidance professionals can help the wide range of staff in organisations, from HR professionals to Unionlearn representatives, to come up with creative solutions for supporting career development at work.

Some of the resistance to providing career support for people in employment is down to concerns about how to do it, the resources required and the return on investment. It cannot happen without a high level of trust in the culture of the organisation. Nor can it happen in organisations that prefer to recruit 'ready-made' labour rather than being prepared to grow talent from within. Career development should not just be understood in an 'individualistic' sense to refer to the pursuit of personal wellbeing and happiness although it would be perverse of an organisation to espouse the opposite value. Career development is about collective wellbeing too. Engagement, affiliation and participation are key expectations as well as benefits of career. It is the interdependence between one person's work and another's that enables individuals to have careers. Where this interdependence is recognised in an organisation, it is easier to see how self-development and organisational development can go hand in hand.

The issue of career support for people in employment is particularly relevant in England at the present time following the Leitch Review and the current proposals for the development of an advancement and careers service for adults. It seems that just as England is beginning to transform its guidance provision for adults, the provision for young people has become even more confused. In his article, Tony Watts examines what is happening to the partnership model in which young people's career education and guidance is delivered by teaching and teaching support staff employed by a school or college working in harness with the guidance staff employed by Connexions (and before that the Careers Service).

It is difficult to talk any longer of a 'national service' providing career guidance for young people in England unlike the situation which still prevails in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. We have 150 local authorities implementing local solutions to young people's information, advice and guidance (IAG) needs. Although they are expected to retain the Connexions branding, the national funding for Connexions is no longer ring-fenced and has declined in real terms by 16% since 2002. The 14-19 reforms and Children's Plan initiatives both provide welcome support from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) for the enhancement of careers education and IAG; but as Tony Watts concludes, we still lack clarity over the model (or models) that we are moving towards and we will need first-class leadership from local authorities and professionals at the local level to ensure effective provision in the future.

Workforce development of school and college careers education and IAG staff is one of the areas which the DCSF is beginning to address. They are about to commission research on the skills gaps of careers co-ordinators and have asked the Training and Development Agency (TDA) to suggest ways of preparing subject staff to give better information and advice on progression in their subjects.

Finally in this issue, Barbara Bassot reports on an evaluation of the first e-learning course for careers co-ordinators offered by Canterbury Christ Church University. One of the objectives of this pilot which met with mixed success was to reinforce the partnership model by encouraging school staff to study for the certificate alongside their link Connexions personal advisers. The potential of e-learning to overcome the training deficit of staff involved in careers education and IAG has not yet been fully exploited. Staff often find it difficult to get out of school to attend face-to-face courses, but this mode of delivery is ideally suited to 'any time, any place and just for me now' professional development. The Canterbury Christ Church University certificate course does also include some optional face-to-face sessions for those who can get to meetings. As we know, blended learning solutions can be even more effective.

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Editor